



September 1, 2016

New capabilities, programs bring hiring blitz to FRCSE



Jonathan Lawrence, left, and Tom Conlin, right, both Fleet Readiness Center Southeast aircraft mechanics, work on H-60 rotors at Hangar 124. (U.S. Navy Photo/Released)

Though Fleet Readiness Center Southeast (FRCSE) has been the U.S. Navy's aviation mechanic since the bi-plane era, the facility is growing at a clip not seen in decades.

With its headquarters at Naval Air Station Jacksonville, FRCSE can at times fly under the radar of many civilians. Yet the word is getting out.

"I'm totally blown away," said Army veteran Jim Rice, originally from Belfast, Maine. Rice was recently hired as a sheet metal worker.

"I'm not blowing smoke, this is a great environment," he said. "It's only been a little more than a month, but everything is going really well."

Rice is not alone. With ground-breaking work on the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter's avionics systems – along with the facility's current work on F/A-18 fighters, H-60 helicopters, P-3C patrol planes, trainer aircraft and the possible assumption of maintenance duties for presidential helicopters – FRCSE has expanded its civilian workforce to 3,155 civilian employees. That's more than 500 people in the last two years.



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FRCSE is already the largest industrial employer in Northeast Florida and Southeast Georgia, but is looking for more. Positions still being sought include sheet metal mechanics, aircraft mechanics, aircraft painters, machinists, non-destructive inspection (NDI) technicians, as well as aeronautical, industrial and electrical engineers, among others.

The new faces hail from all corners of the country. Some are just out of school, while others have decades of experience.

FRCSE sheet metal worker Sam Arulraj, 29, was attending Florida State College at Jacksonville's Airframes and Power Plant (A&P) Program at Cecil Commerce Center, when FRCSE general foreman Buster Hathcock and human resources supervisor Ponhara Po visited the class.

"As an A&P mechanic, you can go anywhere around the world," the Hilliard, Florida native said. "So I did have that option. I also had an option to go to a civilian employer and I turned that down. FRCSE picked me up and I said, 'Hey, this is the best thing going on in Jacksonville and that's what I'm going to do.'"

"So for my family, my future, my career, I wanted to make this my full-time, forever thing."

Leonard Timms, a recently hired sheet metal mechanic at FRCSE, is now back where his naval career began more than two decades ago. Originally from Lubbock, Texas, Timms spent 21 years on active duty, which culminated in a tour as a crew chief with the Navy's Flight Demonstration Squadron, the Blue Angels.

"I wanted to work on Hornets. These are like my babies since they're what I worked on during my active duty time," Timms said in his southern drawl. "At one point, I'd been on every carrier except the USS Kitty Hawk."

After a Navy career that included four deployments and a tour with the Blue Angels, he was ready to spend more time with his family. But something else contributed to his interest in FRCSE.

"I wanted to keep working for my country," he said. "I want to keep getting these back to the fleet to my brothers and sisters."

Though sheet metal mechanics, machinists and other tradesmen are essential to FRCSE, the facility also employs a slew of employees like chemists, engineers and business professionals.

John Lowe, a recently hired business management specialist at FRCSE, spent 23 years in the Army. Wounded while serving in Afghanistan, Lowe retired and earned a bachelor's degree from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and a master of business administration



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from the College of William & Mary.

"I'm happy to be here," Lowe said. "It's going to be nice to be able to serve my country in a different way."

Hathcock, the general foreman of the facility's P-3C Orion production line, has the perspective of 36 years at FRCSE. He joined the facility fresh out of four years of service as an Army paratrooper. He now visits colleges and attends job fairs to bring in the next generation of FRCSE employees.

"I came here in 1980 as an apprentice making \$4.88 per hour," he said. "I've worked my way up and now I'm a general foreman."

"That's what I try to tell these young guys out here: Get in here, come to work every day, do what you're supposed to do and keep learning. It's a great career. It's been good to me."

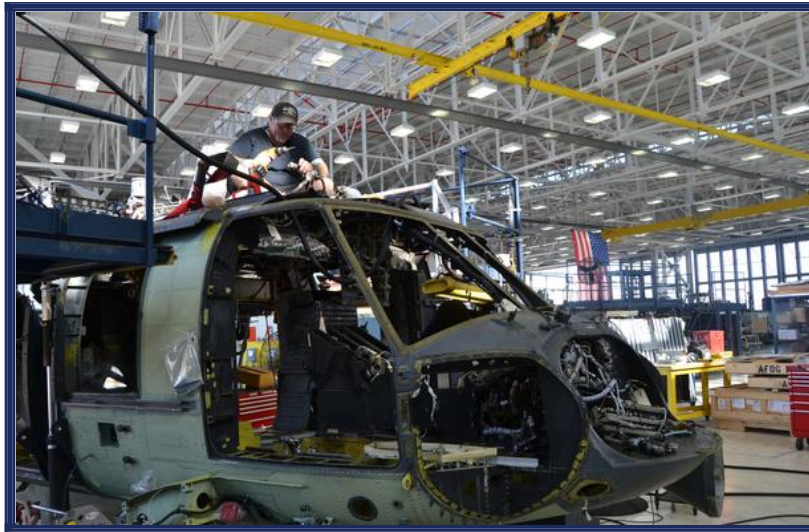


Aviation Structural Mechanic 2nd Class Amber Stevens of Fleet Readiness Center Southeast (FRCSE) Detachment Jacksonville, left, participates in some on the job training on non-destructive inspection (NDI) procedures for a P-3C Orion with FRCSE NDI technician Carol Wetzel. (U.S. Navy Photo/Released)



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Fleet Readiness Center Southeast aircraft mechanic Andrew Charleroy sits atop an H-60 helicopter while he removes and replaces one of the aircraft's hydraulic connectors. (U.S. Navy Photo/Released)



Fleet Readiness Center Southeast sheet metal mechanics Mitchel Del Castillo, left, and Mike Debord, right, work on replacing the trailing edge "skin" on a T-44 Pegasus wing at the military depot. (U.S. Navy Photo/Released)



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Fleet Readiness Center Southeast sheet metal mechanic Chuckie Harvey installs rivets on the wing of a T-44 Pegasus. (U.S. Navy Photo/Released)



Leonard Timms, of Lubbock, Texas, is a newly hired sheet metal mechanic who works on F/A-18 Hornets at Fleet Readiness Center Southeast (FRCSE). After a 21-year Navy career that included four deployments and a tour with the Blue Angels, he was ready spend more time with his family. According to Timms, a career at FRCSE was a perfect fit. Here, Timms runs a bore scope through a Hornet's conduit to check for cracks or imperfections. (U.S. Navy Photo/Released)



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Fleet Readiness Center Southeast (FRCSE) jet engine mechanic Leslie Britts-Parkinson works on an F414 engine module. Britts-Parkinson joined FRCSE in February after working at the facility as a contractor. (U.S. Navy Photo/Released)